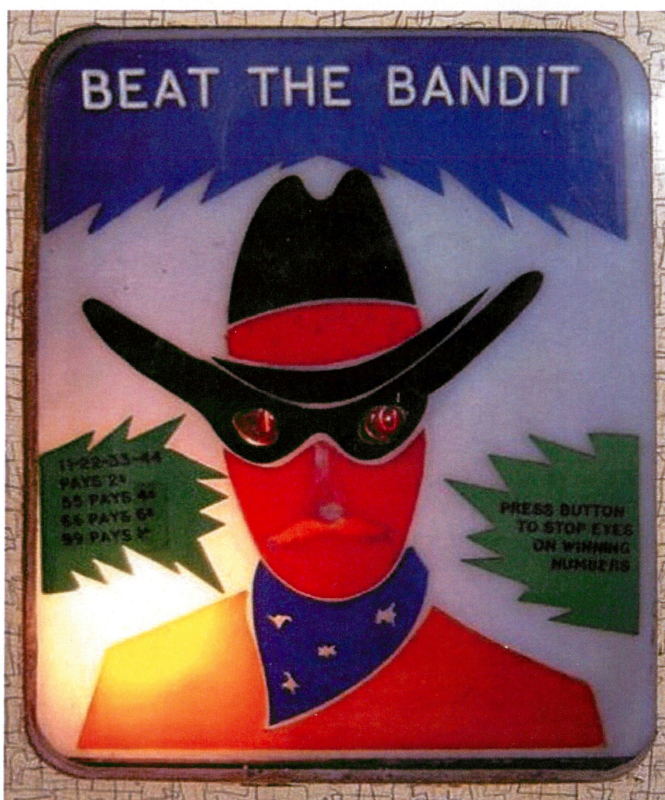


MECHANICAL MEMORIES MAGAZINE

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*The only UK magazine for collectors and enthusiasts
of vintage coin-operated amusement machines*

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Editorial

Hello, and a happy New Year to you all. As you can see, once again the '*must get the magazine out on time*' New Year's resolution hasn't worked! There are various reasons for this, which I won't bore you with, but I am hopeful that at least the February issue will be out a little earlier in the month.

As we're at the start of the year, now might be a good time to remind you all of my constant need for content for the magazine – yes, I need more articles! Stuart's done some research on the firm of Whittaker Bros. and come up with a great piece for this issue. I also have a great article lined up for next month about a visitor attraction (with lots of slots) that hasn't yet been featured in this magazine (you'll find out which one next month). Unfortunately, I don't have much else 'in stock' – so please think about writing something. It could be about a favourite machine in your collection, or perhaps a much-coveted machine that you'd like to have in your collection. Or maybe you could write about childhood memories of playing the arcades at the seaside, during those long summers we used to have. Anything really, but do please try to make a contribution.

Now, just a quick word about the magazine binders that Brian King had produced for us last year – they've all gone! The good news is that Brian will be ordering another batch shortly, so if you missed out on the last lot, fear not, there are more on the way. Start getting your orders in now! (see page 25).

Well that's about it for now. Until next month

All the best

Jerry

Front Cover picture: Beat the bandit, a rare electro-mechanical wall machines from Whittakers, c. 1961. See Stuart's excellent article on page 8.

Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update January 2014

In early January, The Dreamland Trust received a £25,000 cheque for monies raised through a celebrity art auction, organised by Stuart Atkinson and Kiel Shaw of Fontaine Decorative. Monies raised are to be used to open a Dreamland Visitor & Learning Centre in Dreamland's Grade II*-listed seafront amusement arcade this spring.

The art auction was part of a series of events held at the end of last year to celebrate the successful end of a drawn out legal challenge, which finally saw Thanet District Council taking ownership of the site. Other activities included over 2,300 people attending an open afternoon at Dreamland, vintage and classic vehicle rally, volunteer Big Clear day and a fundraising quiz night hosted by the Harbour Arms micro pub.

The Dreamland Trust is now implementing plans to open Dreamland in 2015 under the full-time directorship of Eddie Kemsley. Eddie joins the Dreamland Margate project team this month bringing a wealth of experience and expertise in the leisure and hospitality industries, including seven years as a director of Kent's Port Lympne and Howletts Wild Animal Parks and the transformation of London's Grade II-listed Camden Palace into the award-winning KOKO.

Eddie said: "I am delighted to accept this cheque on behalf of The Dreamland Trust and thank Stuart and Kiel, and all the sponsors, contributors and volunteers for supporting Dreamland. I am thrilled to be joining the Dreamland project team and very much look forward to bringing this exciting and vital project to fruition."

The Visitor & Learning Centre will be managed by The Dreamland Trust's Heritage & Engagement Manager, Jan Leandro, supported by a team of volunteer greeters and guides. The space invites people to find out more about the future plans for Dreamland, the amusement park's extraordinary past and the restoration of the Grade II*-listed Scenic Railway – the UK's oldest wooden roller coaster.

The centre's programme will include talks, tours, exhibitions and learning opportunities along with pop-up events and visiting attractions including drive-in movies, vintage vehicle rallies and live performance. The space will be designed and set dressed to evoke the atmosphere of Dreamland and things to come in 2015.

Thanet District Council has now released tendering documents for both the Scenic Railway engineering and trains contract and the structure and build contract. Expressions of interest for construction management are now being evaluated.

The rides restoration programme is well underway at David Littleboy's workshop in Wakefield with work being carried out on the Dreamland Jets and Gallopers.

Nick Laister

Nick Laister (Chairman, The Dreamland Trust)

Jan Leandro (Heritage and Engagement Officer, The Dreamland Trust)

www.dreamlandmargate.com

www.savedreamland.co.uk

Gallopers:

A Survey of Surviving Sets of Galloping Horses

**from an original project by Michael Smith
with additional research by Kevin Scrivens and Stephen Smith**

In the late 1970s, a new group, the Fairground Association of Great Britain was formed, and with it came a new magazine 'A Century of Tobers' (later renamed The Fairground Mercury). One of the features of this new magazine was a series of articles which surveyed all surviving sets of Galloping Horses in the UK. The articles were later revised and republished in booklet form, and have formed the main reference on this subject for many years.

Over the past few years, the subject has been more extensively researched by fairground historians Kevin Scrivens and Stephen Smith, and the results are now published in this new book.

The book features around 375 black & white and colour photos, many of which have never previously been published.

ISBN Number: 9780955661044

Format: Paperback

Number of Pages: 224

Publication Date: 2013

Publisher: Fairground Heritage Trust

Our Price: £20.00

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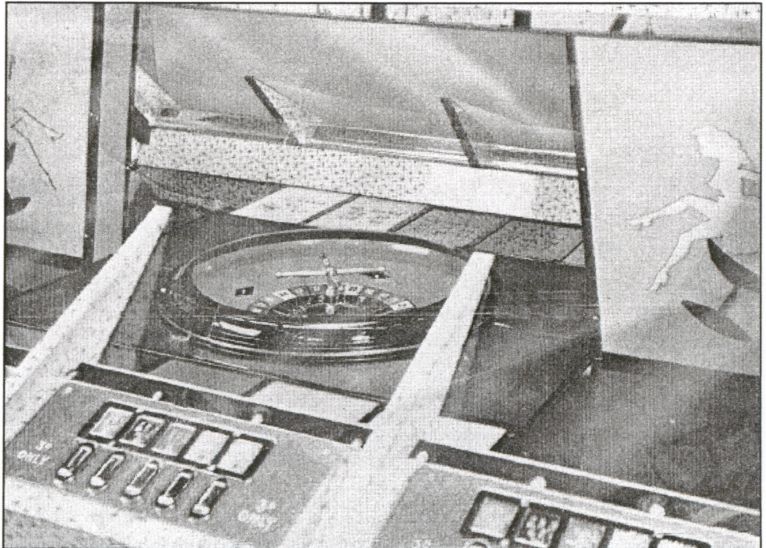
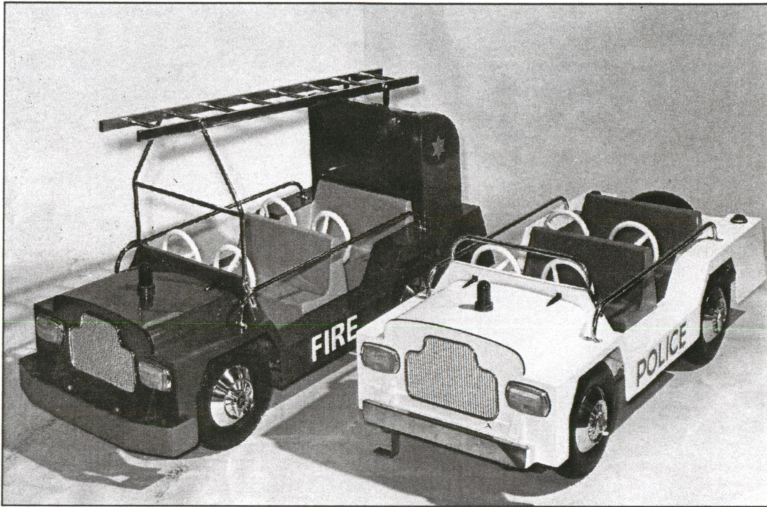
GALLOPERS



A SURVEY OF SURVIVING SETS OF GALLOPING HORSES

From an original project by Michael Smith with additional
research by Kevin Scrivens and Stephen Smith

 **joylandbooks.com**



The Whittaker Bros. Story

(Eric gets his skates on)

By Stuart Dale & John Whittaker

It was 1948, the UK had just come through a gruelling world war and the country was on its knees. Eric Whittaker had returned to his civilian life as an engineer and was working as a draughtsman for a company in Stockport, Cheshire. Eric, having a young family to support, would do extra bits of engineering work in the evenings and weekends. It wasn't long before he had to rent himself a small workshop to cope with the ever increasing demand for his skills. He gradually kited his workshop out with a lathe and a milling machine and other tools of the trade.

One day, a man came to see Eric. He ran a roller skating rink in Cheetham Hill in Manchester and was looking for someone who could make some spare parts and repair his stock of worn out skates. Roller-skating was a very popular pastime in the 30s and 40s and this was going to be quite a big job. Eric took on the job and beavered away for a few weeks until he had finally repaired the last of the skates.

On collecting the last batch of skates, the customer told Eric that he was very pleased with the work he had done. He said he had a friend in Blackpool who ran the dodgem cars at the Olympia funfair, and he was also finding it hard to locate spare parts for his dodgem cars, and would Eric be interested in going over to Blackpool to meet him. The man he was talking about was the legendary Blackpool showman Tom Catlow. Little did Eric know that this was to be that golden moment when his life's path would be changed forever.

The usual supplier of dodgem spares, Hawtins of Blackpool, had closed down their amusements production works and sold off all remaining parts and equipment in a giant auction in December of 1947. Eric, who was still working in his spare time, managed to build up quite a range of dodgem car spares, and as you can imagine the word soon got around about this new supplier.

Things were looking so good that Eric decided to take a selection of his spares and exhibit them at the annual Amusement Trade Show in London. Despite the fact that his first 'stand' was no bigger than a card table, he managed to secure enough orders and enquires to prompt him into working for himself full time. Shortly after that he took on his brother Paul, who was to become the company's secretary, and the two of them set to building up the company.

The company at that time was basically a general engineering company but still kept strong links with the amusement trade. By 1953 the company was very well established and had a workforce of about 25 people. This was the point that Whittakers designed and made their very own dodgem car, and it wasn't long before the orders started to roll in. One order was for a set of dodgems for Penang, Malaysia.

The company also produced a range of children's track cars, which were very successful. Whittakers soon took on their own electricians who were employed to design and develop a token slot for the dodgem cars, so that customers could pay at a booth and then insert the token in the cars themselves. This also helped the operators to keep a tight check on who was handling their money.





Above, Whittakers Dodgems got royal approval when a young Prince Charles couldn't resist a turn at the wheel.

Opposite page top, *In this photo of Whittakers first dodgem car you can see Eric's two sons in the driving seat, John on the left and Paul on the right. Lucky boys!*

Opposite page bottom, *motor racing legends Jim Clark and Graham Hill swap the racetrack for the dodgem track!*

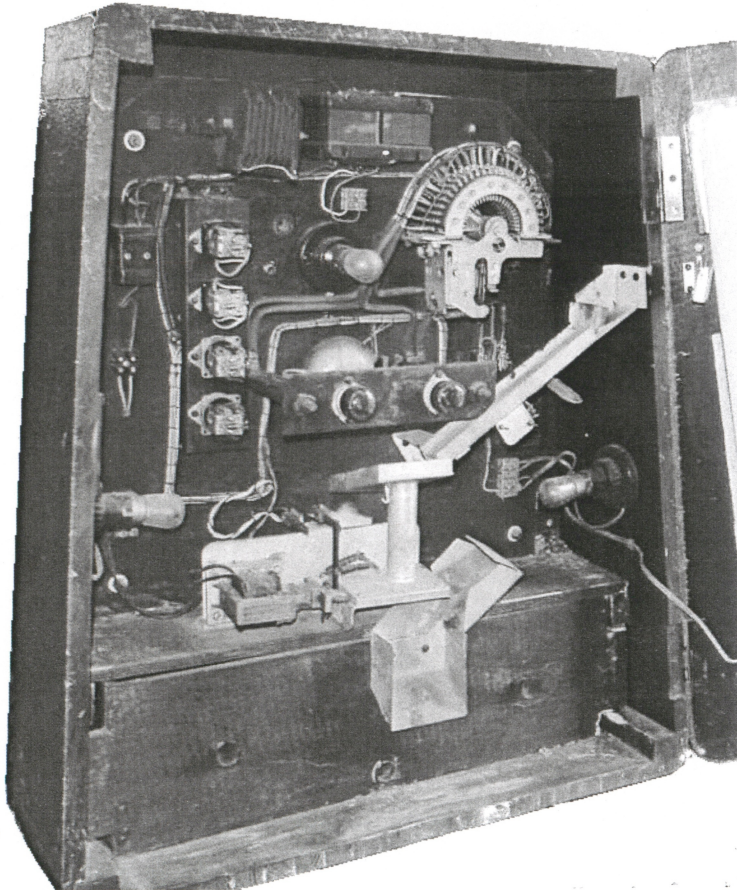
In 1961 the company was officially registered as *Whittaker Bros. (Amusement Rides) Ltd.* At this time, they were approached by a customer who asked them to design and make a large four player coin operated machine, which was to become Whittakers first slot machine. The machine was called the **Monty Carlo Rally**. It stood about six feet wide and was about five feet tall, and had four play stations, each of which could take up to five one penny bets.

On the large playfield of the machine, there was a map of Europe with five destinations marked by indicator lamps. The destinations were: Lisbon, Stockholm, Monte Carlo, Brussels & Glasgow. The way the game worked was simple, if you put a penny in the slot marked Lisbon, and the flashing lights stopped with Lisbon remaining lit you won, if it stopped on any of the other destinations you lost. The electric 'brain' of the machine was made up of a set of ex GPO relays and uniselectors, and they worked very well. It is not known just how many of these machines were made, or if any still survive, but I have managed to locate a photo.



Whittaker's entry into coin-op, Monte Carlo Rally.

Also at about this time Whittakers produced what for me is an iconic machine that just shouts out the 1960s. It was a Formica clad wall mounted machine with a bright Perspex front. There were several different models made with names like **Beat the Bandit**, **Beat the Clown**, and **Beat the Blinkers**. Each of the machines had a pair of Nixie number tubes for the eyes, and all the machines worked in the same way. You would place a penny in the slot and the numbers in the eyes would start flash very quickly. When you pushed the stop button the aim was to get the eyes to stop on the same number to win. The electrics for the machines were once again ex GPO relays



Inside one of the 'Beat the.....' series of machines.



The very latest series of WALL
MACHINES with brilliantly
illuminated perspex
pictures

The eyes are number valves (which are very reliable
in operation).

When a penny is inserted into the
valves and the button is pressed, the machine
winning numbers. The numbers change
a short period if the button is pressed again.

Voltage 230/250v. A.C.

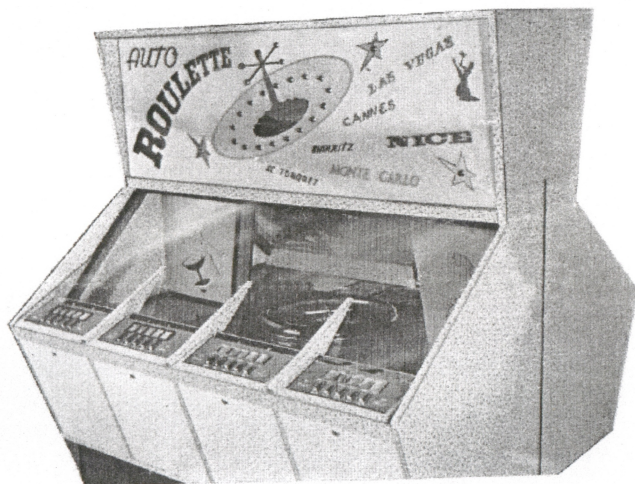


A series of various types of pictures are available in
coloured perspex and all are interchangeable.

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In 1964 Whittakers produced their first **Roulette** multi-player game. This was a large oblong machine designed to stand in the middle of the room, and it had four play stations down each of the long sides, with a roulette wheel under glass in the centre. Each of the numbers on the roulette wheel had a sensitive micro switch underneath. The machine would invite you to place your bets in any or all of the play station's five slots. The wheel would spin, sending the ball shooting out to the rim, and when the wheel stopped the ball would settle at random in one of the numbered slots. If you had bet on that number, you won. This game was a good money taker, as it worked on the old 3d bit.

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Things had moved forwards on the electrical front by this time, and ex GPO relays were no longer used; they had been replaced by modern relays made to special order by Maughan Relays of Manchester. The Roulette machine was so popular it is still in production to this day as a round floor standing machine.

Following on from the success of the Roulette machine, Tom Catlow (the same gentleman who asked about the original dodgem parts) paid Whittakers a visit and asked them to design a new multi-player machine with a horse racing theme. So in 1965, the **Grand National** was produced. Do you recognise the man who is standing to the right in the photo below? Yes that's right, it is Sir Billy Butlin, and I am reliably informed that he was so impressed with the Grand National he placed an on the spot order for six of them for his chain of holiday camps.

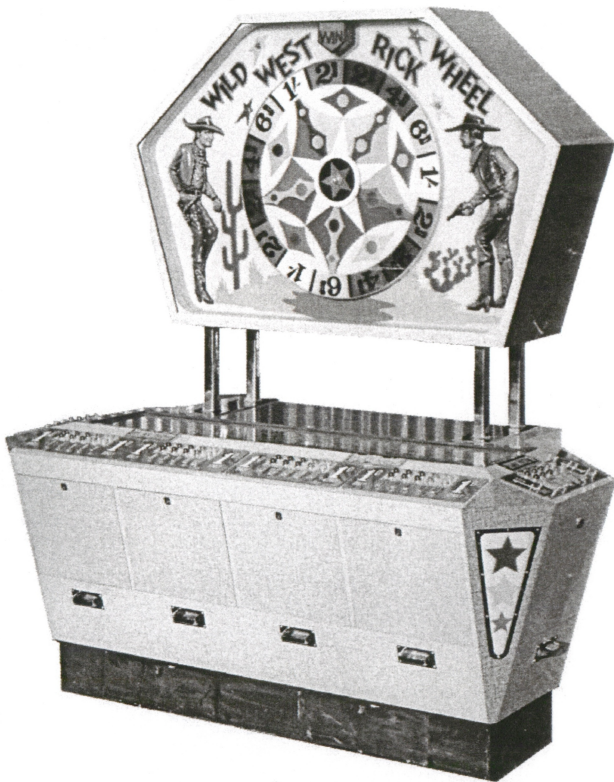


*Sir Billy Butlin with the new Whittakers Grand National horse racing machine.
(Note the Ainsworth Aristocrat stand behind).*

The success of the Roulette and Grand National machines meant that money was available to develop machines such as the **Wild West Rick Wheel**, and this lead on to the fantastic range of coin pushers that are still seen in arcades today.

Stuart Dale

With thanks to Tom Staunton for the vintage fliers



More 1960s Memories

By Robert Rowland

I know from the feedback that I have received from some of you, that a lot of you enjoy reading about my adventures in the 1960s. So over the coming months, I shall be telling you about a few more incidents that happened back then.

Back in the summer of 1969, my family had a one-week holiday break in Great Yarmouth. Having arrived and settled-in to the guesthouse, my first move was to check out the amusement arcades. In one arcade, I became enthralled by one particular machine; it was made by Cromptons and was called **Magic Toppers**



It was a fairly large floor-standing electro-mechanical machine for six players (three sections each side). There were five large coloured top hats inside, red, green, yellow, blue and orange, and hidden from view under each hat was a large pintable-size steel ball.

The gameplay was, before the game was ready to start, to insert a penny into one of the five coloured coin entries. After a few seconds 'no more bets' would light-up, and the five awards lamps would start to flash randomly, before just one would remain lit, showing how much could be won on this play. Awards ranged from 2d up to 10d or 12d. A second display would be lit, showing all five coloured hats. Now the game would start.

One hat would pop up and its corresponding lamp on the inside and outside displays would go out. Then another hat at random would pop up and its corresponding lamps go out and so on, until just one hat was left. This winning hat would then slowly rise, revealing a large steel ball bearing. If you bet on that hat, the machine would then pay out your winnings.

The way a ball bearing was 'magically' revealed when the winning hat lifted was simple. There was a ball under each hat, which was held captive within the hat by an electromagnet. When the winning hat was ready to rise, the magnet would release the ball, which would then be seen on the playdeck as the hat lifted.

Magic Toppers was in constant attract mode, and I stood watching this machine working in all its glory for quite a while, every day during that week-long holiday; it was so addictive to watch and play. I remember winning very little on this machine, but every single game was different and the fun I got from it was immense.

This was the only Magic Toppers machine that I ever saw – Mablethorpe and Skegness arcades never had one. It's very unlikely that any of these machines have survived, but its memories will live on with me forever. Whenever Great Yarmouth is mentioned to me, I always instantly think of Magic Toppers.

Next month I shall be revealing more of my 1960s arcade memories.

Robert Rowland

Coventry 2013

By Martin Larcombe

Well, another well organised and well attended auction on Sunday 24th November 2013 at the Coundon Club in Coventry. Thanks Jerry, and all those involved in running such a great event. I think it was clear to see there is a good keen following for these events, with plenty of sellers and buyers, so I would like to pass on thanks from all those who attended.

This year I apprehensively brought my girlfriend (Pam) along. I say apprehensively because I was thinking she is never going to sit through a three hour auction plus the machine viewing and the journey. Anyway, having warned her, we set off from Essex, a little late as had some running around. As it was going to be a long day we stuck to our 'five a day' principles with raisins in the fruit and nut bar, courgettes, onions, tomatoes from Burger King and orange juice that missed the cup holder and ended up on the car floor! We negotiated the Coventry ring road that runs around the centre of town, with its strange 'do or die' entrances and exits. I found the best policy is to shut your eyes and accelerate. Somehow finding ourselves through, we ignored the voice saying "turn right" and pulled up at the Coundon Club.

As we walked through the doors into darkness, we could just make out Jerry doing meet and greet. Programme shown and money paid we went straight into the hustle and bustle of eager potential buyers studying machines for which they may bid. We really enjoyed seeing all these old penny machines stacked up sometimes three deep, although I think Pam was expecting a little more Vegas glamour (I had not described the Coundon Club before setting off) but it perfectly suits our purpose. Plenty of lots to bid for in our slottie Mecca, with its shady lighting and non-designer interior. It strangely seems to create the right atmosphere for the auction; friendly staff and cheap bar prices help too!

Pam enjoyed watching the whole process of the auction; the different styles of the auctioneers, the shout of "new blood" as a new bidder comes on board, some bidders casually raising their numbers, some thrusting them in the air for fear of not being seen. Also looking at who was buying, "He's buying a lot over there.....Are all these people paying cash?....How much commission does the auctioneer get?" And the next thing I know, she is on her feet waving my number in the air!

There was a good variety of machines this year, from early allwins, Bryans Pyramids to some quite nice bandits of varying ages, bagatelles, plenty of spares, signs, books, memorabilia, seaside postcards and pictures. Most items seem to have sensible reserves and as far as I could tell, most items were sold, with machines transferring themselves to new happy smiley faced owners.

My journey was to specifically to buy a 'sweetie' allwin. I remember as a boy the thrill of seeing the steel ball disappear into the 'WIN' marked shoot, turning the handle and, as if by magic, a chocolate bar appearing at the bottom of the machine. Fortunately a nice example was up for auction that did not require any work and in full working order on a 1d play, so we bid and secured a great Nestle machine, nicely restored with replica wooden beautifully wrapped chocolate bars (now searching for similar sized REAL Choco bars). This will soon be fitted to a suitable wall. It always surprises me when people come to visit how many cannot resist picking up a penny and having a go at playing the machines, young and old.

As far as I could see most people seemed happy with the day and left by either stumbling through the doors carrying their new purchases to be lovingly looked after and restored or with fatter wallets.

Keep up the hard work Jerry, we do all appreciate it. Will you be travelling up the night before again next year? As you mentioned that the slight hangover from the 1.00 am hotel bar finish wasn't helping in the morning.

Martin Larcombe



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Working model type empty cabinet in any condition. Prefer original, although any type considered for rebuild project.

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Alan 0151 645 0347 (Merseyside)

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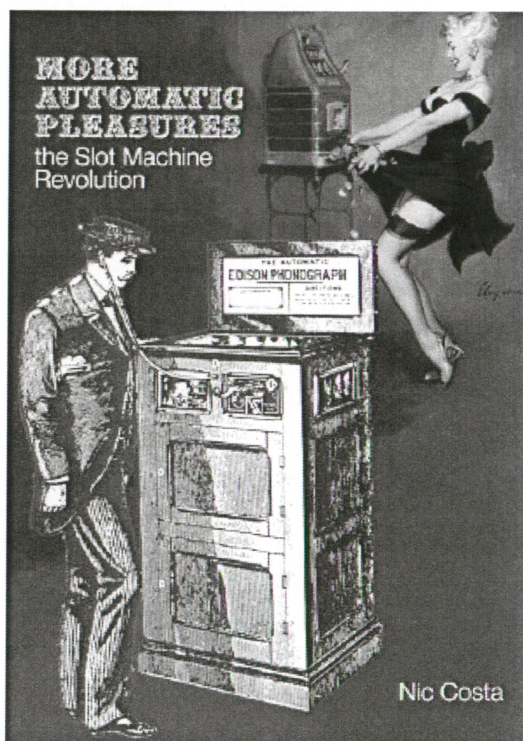
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More Automatic Pleasures: The Slot Machine Revolution

by Nic Costa

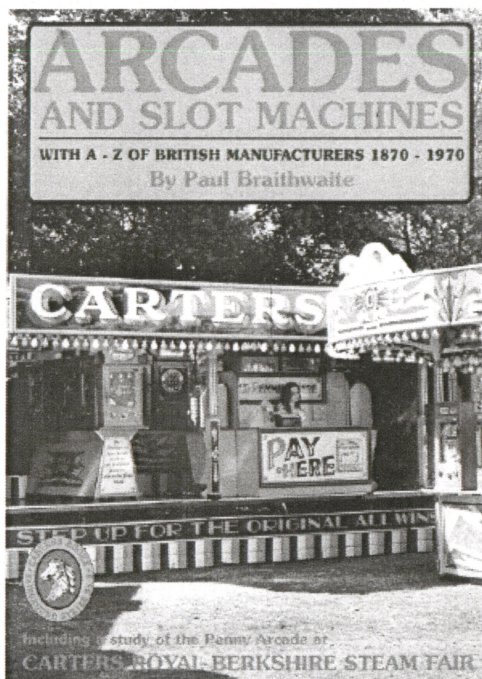
Available at last in book format, Nic Costa's entertaining and well researched articles on the growth and development of the slot machine industries in the USA and the UK from the 1870s to the 1970s, covering the major U.S. (Mills, Caille, Jennings, Rockola, Wurlitzer, Gottlieb, and Bally etc.) and U.K.(Ahrens, Bolland, Brenner, Bryans, etc.) manufacturers and leading pioneers, distributors, and operators. Since their publication in the World's Fair Coin Slot in the 1980s, they have been a primary source of information for anybody interested in the growth, development, and social impact of the gambling, leisure, vending and service industries on both sides of the Atlantic. Softback, 180 pages, b/w. **Price: £17**



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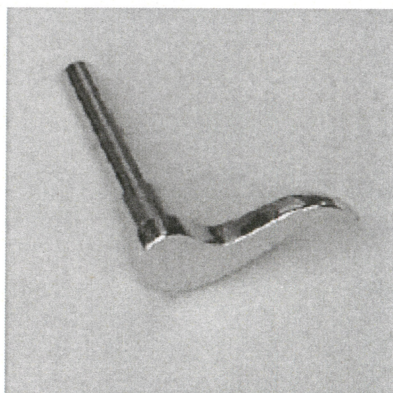
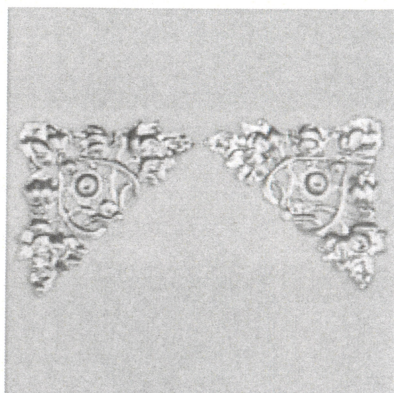
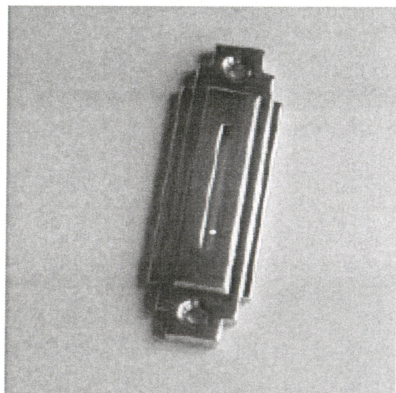
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